

Confronting Fascism

GERM 3450



Dr. Rebecca Haubrich

rebecca.haubrich@dal.ca

M 14.35-16.00

(virtual) office hours: by appointment

In 1935, appalled by the political and social changes that deformed the culturally thriving Weimar Republic into Hitler's Third Reich, German playwright Bertolt Brecht began writing a compilation of theatrical scenes inspired by his times – an artistic project created “in order to see this people, compiled of what sort of men, in which kind of condition, with what type of thoughts, that [Hitler] could gather them under his flag.” In this seminar, our inquiry will follow and expand on Brecht's line of questioning in order to gain insight to the rise of Fascism as a new political mass movement that would, like no other, shape and darken the 20th century. Taking into account the movement's European roots, which would culminate in Germany, we will query the political, ideological, and antisemitic practices of Fascism in order to gain a broader understanding of its national and global impact. Focus of our interdisciplinary examination will be the works of writers, philosophers, artists, and filmmakers whose works have been variously impacted by the politics and social dynamics of their time. Our historical trajectory will lead us from the early theoretical conceptions of this new kind of nationalist ideology to an exploration of the life and suffering within the Third Reich, its deterministic notions of art, gender, and familial life, to the atrocities of the Holocaust, and toward post-war attempts of historical *Aufarbeitung* [working-through the past] in and beyond Germany. Finally, we will discuss the lasting necessity to continue this work of working-through and contemporary concerns that democratic societies face in view of neo-fascist movements.

Learning Outcomes and Course Management

Learning Outcomes

Through an interdisciplinary exploration of artistic and philosophical works impacted by the rise of fascism during the 20th century, this course offers a broad introduction to the ideology and politics of fascism, its impact on culture and society, as well as an outlook on the lasting necessity to keep working through the past in order to recognize and prevent its recurrence in contemporary democracies. A primary learning goal is the sharpening of analytical and close reading skills that support a critical approach to political, historical, and cultural objects; moreover, you will get acquainted with the broader framework of German Fascism and learn how to analyze and interpret cultural works of the era in their historical context.

Course Organization

This course will be conducted in a **hybrid format, including synchronous and asynchronous activities**, which will respectively emphasize close readings of primary texts and visual media as well as their analysis and discussion. For **each week, you will work through one topical course-module consistent of 3 parts**:

- 1. Preparation:** In preparation of parts 2 and 3, you will read (or view) the primary text and / or film at the core of each module (see: course calendar). Frequently, you will also find instructional videos on *Brightspace*, which accompany the reading and will help you analyze the primary sources.
- 2. Virtual class discussions:** On Mondays, from 14.35-16.00, we will meet on *Zoom* to discuss the primary material of the week (meeting-link on *Brightspace*). You are expected to attend these meetings and participate actively throughout the semester. Your camera should be turned on during these meetings; if individual circumstances prevent this, please get in touch ahead of time. If possible, set up a workstation that helps you to take notes and participate in the discussion actively (lying in bed is usually – and unfortunately – not the most productive position for a productive conversation).
- 3. Asynchronous activities:** Following class discussions, you will have 48 hours to complete that week's asynchronous activity, which you will find on *Brightspace*. The format of these activities will vary in style and are designed to give you an additional opportunity to engage with the materials as well as other students. You are encouraged to develop any of your work for these activities into one of your writing assignments. Frequently, there will be online forum discussions. While participating, please be respectful in commenting on the work of your peers. One way of showing respect is putting effort into your replies to their posts: Instead of just saying: "Nice!" or "Interesting!", you should comment on specifics and engage with their argument; when critique seems appropriate, please be mindful and explain what you would change or improve.

Writing Assignments

There will be 3 writing assignments throughout the course: 1 timeline entry (500-600 words), 1 short paper (750-1000 words), and 1 final paper (1700-2000 words). First, each student will contribute a timeline entry, dedicated to a particular event during the rise and fall of Fascist Germany, which we will collect into a shared timeline in order to create our own historical overview. The focus of your two papers will be on close reading and analysis: You will work toward your own interpretations of primary texts, which are informed by class and online discussions, yet will show your ability to independently engage with these works. **You will be required to schedule an individual virtual meeting with me to plan and discuss the topic of your final paper.**

***** Trigger Warning:** *The content and discussion in this course will necessarily engage with racism, anti-Semitism, and violence. Authentic texts, video and image material from the era will be emotionally and intellectually challenging to engage with. In order to discuss this potentially disturbing content appropriately and productively, I ask all students to help to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and sensitivity. If you ever wish to discuss your personal reactions to this material, either with the class or with me, I welcome such discussion as an appropriate part of our coursework.*

Grading

Preparation and participation:	20%
Asynchronous activities:	25%
Writing Assignments:	30%
Final paper:	25%

Course Calendar

Date	Topics & Texts	Assignments
Week 1	Introduction	
M, 9/14	Paxton, Robert O.: <i>The Anatomy of Fascism</i> (2004), Ch. 1 (p. 3-23)	
Week 2	Fascist Politics	
M, 9/21	Arendt, Hannah: <i>The Origins of Totalitarianism</i> (1951), Ch. 12 (p. 389-419)	
Week 3	Totalitarianism	
M, 9/28	Klemperer, Victor: <i>The Language of the Third Reich</i> (1947) [excerpts]	
Week 4	Life and Suffering in the Third Reich	
M, 10/05	Brecht, Bertolt: <i>Fear and Misery of the Third Reich</i> (1935-43) [excerpts]	timeline entry due
Week 5		
M, 10/12	— Thanksgiving Day —	

Week 6	Born Female – Gender, Duty, and Disobedience	
M, 10/19	Briedenthal, Renate: <i>When Biology became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany</i> (1989) [excerpts] Färberböck, Max / Fischer, Erica: <i>Aimée & Jaguar</i> (1999) [film]	
Week 7	Politics & Aesthetics	
M, 10/26	Hitler, Adolf: 'Speech at the Opening of the House of German Art in Munich' (1937) Stollmann, Rainer / Smith, Ronald L.: <i>Fascist Politics as a Total Work of Art</i> (1978)	
Week 8	Fascist Propaganda – Hitler's Cinema	
M, 11/2	Riefenstahl, Leni: <i>Triumph of the Will</i> (1935) [film] Kracauer, Siegfried: <i>From Caligari to Hitler</i> (1947) [excerpts]	short paper due
Week 9		
	— Fall Study Break —	
Week 10	The Holocaust I	
M, 11/16	Resnais, Alain: <i>Night and Fog</i> (1956) [film] Georges Didi-Huberman: <i>Images in Spite of All</i> (2003) [excerpts]	
Week 11	The Holocaust II	
M, 11/23	Améry, Jean: <i>At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and its Realities</i> (1964) [excerpt] Heger, Heinz: <i>The Men with the Pink Triangle: The True Life-And-Death Story of Homosexuals in the Nazi Death Camps</i> (1972) [excerpts]	
Week 12	Aufarbeitung – Working Through the Past	
M, 11/30	Arendt, Hannah: <i>Eichmann in Jerusalem</i> (1963), Ch. 1-3 (p. 3-55) & Ch. 14 (p. 220-233) Sivan, Eyal: <i>The Specialist</i> (1999) [film]	
Week 13	Aufarbeitung – Continuation in the Present	
M, 12/7	Akin, Fatih: <i>In the Fade</i> (2017) [film] Koehler, Daniel: <i>Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century: The 'National Socialist Underground' and the History of Terror from the Far Right in Germany</i> (2017), Ch. 5 (p. 157-188)	final paper due: 12/18

*** All readings will be made available as PDFs.**

University Policies and Statements

This course is governed by the academic rules and regulations set forth in the University Calendar and the Senate. Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq. We are all Treaty people.

Academic Integrity

At Dalhousie, we are guided in all of our work by the values of academic integrity: honesty, trust, fairness, responsibility and respect. As a student, you are required to demonstrate these values in all of the work you do. The University provides policies and procedures that every member of the university community is required to follow to ensure academic integrity:

(http://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/academic-integrity.html).

Accessibility

The Student Accessibility Centre is Dalhousie's centre of expertise for student accessibility and accommodation. The advising team works with students on the Halifax campus who request accommodation as a result of: a disability, religious obligation, or any barrier related to any other characteristic protected under Human Rights legislation (NS, NB, PEI, NFLD):

(https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/accessibility.html).

Student Code of Conduct

Everyone at Dalhousie is expected to treat others with dignity and respect. The Code of Student Conduct allows Dalhousie to take disciplinary action if students don't follow this community expectation. When appropriate, violations of the code can be resolved in a reasonable and informal manner – perhaps through a restorative justice process. If an informal resolution can't be reached, or would be inappropriate, procedures exist for formal dispute resolution:

(https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/safety-respect/student-rights-and-responsibilities/student-life-policies/code-of-student-conduct.html).

Diversity and Inclusion – Culture of Respect

Every person at Dalhousie has a right to be respected and safe. We believe inclusiveness is fundamental to education. Dalhousie is strengthened in our diversity and dedicated to achieving equity. We are committed to being a respectful and inclusive community where everyone feels welcome and supported, which is why our university prioritizes fostering a culture of diversity and inclusiveness:

(<https://www.dal.ca/cultureofrespect.html>).

University Policies and Programs

- Important Dates in the Academic Year: http://www.dal.ca/academics/important_dates.html
- Dalhousie Grading Practices Policy: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/academic/grading-practices-policy.html
- Grade Appeal Process: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/grades-and-student-records/appealing-a-grade.html
- Sexualized Violence Policy: https://www.dal.ca/dept/university_secretariat/policies/health-and-safety/sexualized-violence-policy.html
- Scent-Free Program: <http://www.dal.ca/dept/safety/programs-services/occupational-safety/scent-free.html>

Learning and Support Resources

- General Academic Support – Advising: https://www.dal.ca/campus_life/academic-support/advising.html